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## Study boosts Pure Michigan ad campaign

As industry seeks to restore funds, survey finds millions visited state

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*Detroit Free Press*

A recent study shows the acclaimed Pure Michigan television ad campaign, with the voice of actor Tim Allen, lured 2 million visitors from around the U.S. and Ontario to Michigan last year, and they spent \$500 million in the state.

Of those travelers, 680,000 came from outside the Great Lakes region, according to the survey by Longwoods International, a Toronto-based tourism research firm.

### \$30M in funding

The study is a lobbying boost for Michigan's tourism industry, which hopes to convince state lawmakers to restore \$30 million for the award-winning ad campaign, the same amount spent last year. Funding has dwindled to \$5.4 million this year because of the state budget shortages.

But some lawmakers are reluctant to spend money on tourism ads when the state faces a \$1.7 billion deficit next fiscal year.

The study was commissioned by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, which oversees the state's travel promotions.

"The key thing is this is working," said Lisa Danscok, MEDC senior vice president for marketing.

"It's generating more people coming to Michigan than when we were not operating the campaign."

The study concluded that for every dollar spent on the ad campaign outside of the Great Lakes region, \$2.23 was spent by tourists in Michigan. Last year was the first year the campaign was expanded nationwide.

### Limited without funds

Danscok said without the \$30 million, the ad campaign would be limited to surrounding Great Lakes states and Ontario.

Gov. Jennifer Granholm, in her State of the State speech Wednesday, called on lawmakers to fund the Pure Michigan campaign, though she did not give specific amount.

Tourism industry spokespeople testified Thursday to the Senate Finance Committee that a robust Pure Michigan campaign will keep and create new tourism jobs.

"If we don't do it, we're going to lose tourism jobs, and that will drive Michigan's recession even deeper," Steve Yencich, of the Michigan Lodging and Tourism Association told the committee.

Committee chair Sen. Nancy Cassis, R-Novi, questioned whether the tourism industry was willing to spend enough of its own money on a campaign that helps it. Last year, private tourism groups kicked in \$1.7 million to the program, according to the MEDC.

"Those who benefit should not always look to government," Cassis said.

## Validity questioned

Cassis also questioned the validity of the tourism study because it had been commissioned by the MEDC.

The study surveyed 1,500 travelers to Michigan from states other than Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin. The responses were expanded statistically to include all households in other states.

Lawmakers are trying to come up with revenue for the ad campaign. Cassis' committee is expected to vote on three bills that would designate a portion of increased state sales tax revenues to the Pure Michigan campaign.

But that would not raise any new money for the campaign this year because sales tax revenues are declining, not increasing.

A proposal to levy a \$2.50 surcharge on airport rental cars was shelved for lack of support.

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